

## **Adaptations Policy**

### **Aim**

- We are committed to providing a flexible adaptations service, to help promote independence, security and dignity of customers' within their own homes.
- This policy aims to offer a service that is fair and responsive to the needs of our customers' whilst also taking into account the need to utilise our current adapted stock effectively and the need to target resources to properties which can be adapted to provide an accessible home.

### **Scope**

- This Policy applies to all Onward's customers and is to be followed by Onward's employees and contractors.

### **Policy detail**

- We aim to make all reasonable adjustments necessary to meet a vulnerable person's needs, where it is possible, practical and financially prudent / cost effective to do so.
- As well as the person's needs, we will take into account property type, access, location, future adaptability and demand when assessing all major adaptations.
- Baths in houses will be retained where possible and appropriate shower facilities incorporated.
- Adaptations will be assessed on an individual case by case basis.
- We will only consider requests for ramps for wheelchair users who have been assessed by the local authority wheelchair service / Occupational Therapist.
- We will not provide any adaptations for mobility scooters.
- We will not fund vertical lifts.
- We will not carry out any adaptations if the property is under occupied by two or more bedrooms.
- We will not unreasonably withhold permissions when customers asks to arrange and fund their own adaptations.

### **Definitions**

- Adaptations are changes to a customers' home to help overcome practical problems when age or disability limits your daily activities or those of your household.
- Adaptations may include specialist equipment, extra fittings or alterations that enable vulnerable customers' and their families to overcome difficulties in their home and make them more suitable to their needs.
- We consider an accessible environment to include access to the main entrance of a property and also access to bathing and toilet facilities.
- Minor adaptations are smaller non-technical items (or work) that are usually fixed to a property and designed to meet a specific need. For example items

such as grab rails, lever taps, flashing light doorbells, kick plates, safety glass, level access thresholds, assistive technology and repositioning of switches would be regarded as minor adaptations.

- Major adaptations are larger specialist equipment or work. Typically these can include stair lifts, level access or easy access shower solutions, hoists, specialist baths and toilets, adapted kitchens and larger structural alterations.

### Priorities

- Major adaptations requests will be prioritised initially on assessment need and then in date order. Installation will be subject to sufficient financial resources being available at time of approval.

Major adaptation priorities:

Category	Assessment Need
Critical	A Diagnosed life limiting condition
	Adaptations to facilitate decants
	Adaptation necessary to allow discharge from hospital
Standard	Adaptations that will help increase independence

### Eligibility

- You must either be a tenant of Onward or a permanent member of an Onward's household.
- There must be a supporting assessment of need.
- For major adaptations you must have been an occupant in the household for at least 12 months to be considered for the adaptations service.

**Approval for major adaptation requests will however be subject to the following conditions being met:**

- It being practical or possible to create a fully level access environment at the property.
- It being financially prudent / cost effective to provide the adaptations recommended and the cost of the adaptations do not exceed 50% of the value of the property to be adapted.
- The property does not have a potentially limited life such as those in designated clearance areas, or is scheduled for major refurbishment.
- The adaptation is not likely to cause an obstruction or pose a potential risk.
- There has been a substantial change in a person's condition / need since time of allocation or a life limiting illness has been diagnosed.
- The tenant does not have an active transfer application, Right To Acquire or Right To Buy application or is seeking a mutual exchange.
- Onward is not seeking or considering seeking possession of the property for anti-social behaviour or rent arrears.

- The tenant does not have debts to Onward greater than the value of 6 weeks gross rent and a repayment plan is in place at time of application and being maintained at point of approval.
- The tenant has agreed to pay any contributions that may be applicable after a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) test of financial means.

We reserve the right to refuse a major adaptation request if one or more of these conditions has not been met. If an applicant is dissatisfied with any aspect of our adaptations service this will be dealt with via Onward's Comments, Compliments and Complaints policy.

## Service Standards

- We will acknowledge all adaptation requests received within 5 working days.
- We will ensure applicants are kept informed throughout the process and advise of any local arrangements that apply.
- We aim to complete minor adaptations within 14 working days of application
- We aim to complete all major adaptations in no more than 6 months following receipt of Occupational Therapist assessment. These waiting times are all subject to budgetary constraints.

The table below outlines our measured targets in terms of adaptation requests.

Category	Assessment (working days)	Works (working days)	Total delivery (working days)
Minor	7	7	14
Major Critical	14	77	91
Major Standard	82	100	182
Extensions	165	200	365

## Assessment

- For Minor Adaptations, tenants will be encouraged to self-assess where possible. Members of our team will also provide advice and support if required and assist with referral to social services for aids and equipment.
- For Major Adaptations a Social Investment Specialists will carry out an initial home visit to assess a person's needs and the suitability of their home to adapt in line with this policy.
- For all major adaptation requests including extensions an Occupational Therapist assessment is required.
- Occupational Therapy assessments will be carried out by the local authority.

## Installation

- Onward will work in partnership with the local authority to deliver adaptations to our tenants.
- Minor adaptations will be installed by Onward's designated minor adaptations contractors.
- Major adaptations will be installed by either a specialist contractor appointed by Onward or a contractor appointed by the local authority. This will be determined by the local authority agreement in place.
- Our contractors will employ appropriately trained and skilled staff to carry out the adaptation work required. Each job will be given a target time for completion and we will monitor contractor performance against these targets.
- All Onward contractors have been financially vetted and have either signed up to our policies and procedures or have produced their own to a similar standard, in respect of confidentiality, data protection, health & safety, equality and diversity, safeguarding and code of conduct. They have agreed to adhere to Onward's 'Contractor Pledges' and this is monitored by means of regular contractor performance meetings and bi-annual contractor appraisals.

## Funding

- Minor adaptations will be funded from Onwards own resources, up to a value of £1,000
- Major adaptations will be funded by Onward and when eligible, local authority match funding. These arrangements will depend on the local authority agreement in place.
- Where possible Onward will apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) on the tenant's behalf to contribute towards the cost of Major Adaptations.
- Onwards maximum contribution towards any major adaptation will be £10,000.
- If the cost to Onward of a Major Adaptation is in excess of £10,000 then we will approach the local authority to seek agreement for DFG funding to meet these additional costs. For all cases costing more than £10,000 approval will be needed from Onward's Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

### **Approval by SLT will be subject to the following:**

- It being financially prudent / cost effective to carry out the adaptations at the property and the works do not exceed 50% of the value of the property.
- Local Authority match funding/DFG being in place.
- A transfer to more suitable accommodation has been fully investigated.
- The level of previous Major Adaptations contributions over the last 2 years.
- If a tenant is required to pay a contribution as a result of a local authority Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) test of resources, Onward will make an arrangement prior to work starting on site. Onward will not contribute towards tenant eligible costs.
- We will also consider other resources which may be available from charitable sources or health partners.
- Onward funding will not be made available where an offer of suitable alternative accommodation has been unreasonably refused by a tenant.

## Recycling

- We aim to recycle adaptations and equipment where economical and practical to do so.
- We will ensure that if recyclable adaptations cannot be re-used immediately they will be stored for installation at a later date.

## Rehousing

- If a person has an adaptation need and we are unable to adapt their home as outlined in this policy we will provide advice and assistance to help them find more suitable / appropriate accommodation.
- Where a person is under occupying and needs to move we will offer to adapt the smaller property rather than their current home.

## Replacements / Removals

- We aim to leave in place non-recyclable major adaptations in our properties and utilise our adapted stock by matching them to an applicant's needs.
- We will only consider removing a major adaptation if it is beyond repair, the property is no longer occupied by a vulnerable person and where the future demand for the property would be limited with the adaptation.
- If a replacement is required as part of our planned maintenance programme or the existing adaptation is beyond repair we will replace the adaptation on a like for like basis, or consider alternatives which will better meet the tenant's needs.
- Onwards Property Services Team will manage and maintain all stock information relating to adaptations.

## Servicing and Service Charges

- We will ensure that Customers are aware of any potential future service charge prior to commencing the works. We will set this information out to the customer in writing and will require the customer to provide signed confirmation that they are aware of the future service charge and that the payment of the same is a condition of the works being undertaken. Such confirmation which may constitute a variation to the existing tenancy agreement will be sought prior to work starting on site.
- On expiry of the guarantee period serviceable adaptations such as stair lifts, hoists and bath lifts will be maintained and serviced by one of our approved contractors.
- We will apply a service charge to reflect the annual maintenance costs we incur and for which the customer has responsibility to pay.
- The legal rights of Onward's tenants are set out in their tenancy agreement and this policy does not create any additional legal rights.

## Monitoring

We survey all tenants who have accessed the service and measure our performance against our service standards on a quarterly basis.

An annual report highlighting service performance is submitted to Onward's Senior Leadership Team.

## Equality impact assessment

An Equality Impact assessment was carried out on this policy and no adverse discrimination was identified.

## Complaints

Onward takes any dissatisfaction with its Adaptations process seriously and would always welcome feedback. All complaints regarding the service will be dealt with via Onward's Comments, Compliments and Complaints policy.

Linked documents:	Adaptations procedures
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Policy lead:	Louise Owens
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Document replaces:	Adaptations policies of Liverpool Housing Trust, Contour Homes, Peak Valley HA, Hyndburn Homes and Ribble Valley Homes